

Unity

“Every place is the center of the world.”

—Black Elk

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Religious Exploration
- 2 President’s Message
- 4 Social Justice
- 5 Life of the Congregation
- 6 Spiritual Practice
- 7 Sacred Story for All Ages
- 8 Calendar

Rev. Mark Kiyimba to Lead July 22 Service

See page 5.

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It’s true what they say: “We’re all in this together.”

I’m not sure who “they” are, but I’m sure they’re right. One of the greatest gifts—a near indescribable gift—is feeling the truth of that statement. We’re all in this together. I’ve felt it as part of a relay team and as part of a theatre crew. I’ve felt it marching in a rally for immigrants’ rights and I’ve felt it at the Unitarian Universalist Association’s General Assembly. It’s that split second sense of awe that overtakes you: suddenly you realize the sacred connections—the way your life is bonded to the lives of others.

The odd thing is how this feeling, this sense of unity, does not require equanimity. In fact, I’ve felt it most powerfully when a contest was afoot. Our annual meeting occurred on May 20th. This was the longest annual meeting we have run in my five years at UUCS. This was also, based on the agenda, the most likely to generate strong feelings.

Difficult realities about our budget were shared. Important changes were proposed. Many questions were asked. Yet even as we went deeper into the difficult material, I felt that sense of “we’re all in this together” grow.

You might imagine it would have lessened or even shriveled up and died! The truth is that amidst contest, we solidified our bonds, one to the other.

When you believe in something together, a sense of unity grows. And when you believe in something together, like a congregation, there will be contests. There will be a sense of urgency—a shared commitment to protect and preserve the institution. Black Elk is known to have said, “Every place is the center of the world.” The center of the world is the place where people come together—the place they claim as their shared home.

We have claimed this congregation. We claim it every time we fight for it—every time we love it so much that we’ll dare speak our minds and dare listen to the minds of others. We fight for it every time we trust our leaders to lead and every time we dare become leaders ourselves.

I am proud of the work we did at our annual meeting. I knew, as we shared those two hours, that we were all in this together. And honestly, if that’s the case, we can do anything we put our minds and hearts to doing.

MINISTER’S MESSAGE

Unity Amidst Contest



Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

Love Surrounds Us

When I was in 4th grade, I went to a lock-in with a group that included girls from 9 to 18 years old. After hours of talking and playing cards under bright fluorescent lights, I went outside into the cool darkness of the evening. It was a clear night far from city lights, so I could easily see many stars.



*Linda Weaver,
Director of Religious
Exploration*

As I always did when looking at the night sky, I observed the moon and stars and wondered at the immenseness of the universe. I was awed by the thought of the many people who had and who would look at these stars with the same sense of wonder, and I pondered questions such as how everything began, why it began, and what my place in the universe might be.

A girl who was in middle school and who I did not know well soon joined me. We spent a long time looking at the stars and talking about our lives. We talked about our dreams and the big questions we both considered, especially when we looked at the stars. She was four or five years older, which made her seem almost grown up to me at the time. I had lived in two different towns and she had always lived on the farm just across the field from where we were sitting. Her father was an elder at the Friends Meeting near her home. I was the granddaughter of a Methodist minister and knew nothing of Quakers beyond the stories I had read about 19th century families.

As we talked, I realized that even though there were many differences between us, we had many of the same questions and concerns and similar dreams. This provided a direct experience of what I had suspected, or had been told many times, that people all over the world look at the stars and share the same questions, concerns, and desires.

This summer, our Religious Education (RE) program provides children with an opportunity to experience the same sense of wonder and to consider their own connection to the universe and all people and creatures under the stars. We are excited to offer a program based on Connie Barlow's "We Are Made of Stardust" which nurtures a sense of awe as the children and their leaders explore the vast universe and the intersections of science and spirituality. The

participants will consider the beginnings of the universe, their relation to the stars, and their own important role in the universe. In doing so, they will discover how they are a part of the universe and the universe is a part of them.

The Children's Religious Exploration Calendar and a list of programs and events for children and families is at the end of the RE column on the UUCS website at www.uusterling.org.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The UUCS Board of Trustees: A Unified Group



*Dorine Colabella
DiConti,
Board President*

How wonderful that my final letter to you as board president must follow the liturgical theme of unity. I'm probably supposed to write about unity as it relates to our faith, but instead I will take the opportunity to share how your board worked as a unified group to bring UUCS to where we are today. They consistently brought a spirit and level of commitment I am impressed by. Sitting on the board in any capacity is hard, but very rewarding, work.

Having sat on enough boards in the past, I can tell you that this year was the best experience I've ever had. This is due to the people I had the privilege to serve with. These are the people, and the words of appreciation, listed below, were noted by fellow board members, our Director of Religious Education, Linda Weaver, and our minister, Rev. Anya.

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"**ALLIE ROCHE**, member at large, asked insightful questions. She had the ability to always encapsulate what many of us may have been unclear about. She was always considering the youth of the congregation and made great brownies for us!"

"I appreciate Allie's ability to put herself into others shoes and understand how someone else may feel."

"Allie thinks deeply and brings compassion and grace to everything she does."

*continued, next page*

*President's Message, continued from previous page*

"I appreciate Allie for her quiet comments that remind us of some central point we are missing.."



"**KIM CLELAND**, member at large, deserves acknowledgement for her sense of humor that she brought to every meeting—and for her chalice lighting abilities."

"Kim's keen observation and wit expands my view of a situation. To think someone so young is so smart!"

"Kim provided a sense of humor which made the work of the board much easier than it would have been otherwise."



"**KEVIN MANUEL-SCOTT**, member at large, deserves acknowledgement for leading the Mission and Vision conversations."

"I have learned to appreciate his businessman's point of view. Hearing him speak opens a new way of thinking. I also appreciate the esteem in which he holds his family."

"Kevin provided wisdom and a deep sense of purpose."



"I appreciate **YVONNE CENTALA**, secretary, continually giving and volunteering and devoting so much of her time to helping UUCS."

"Yvonne has a willingness to step in when needed on the board and elsewhere at UUCS and brought a sense of joy."

"I appreciate Yvonne's constant positive attitude and enthusiasm for life."



"Yvonne and **MICHELLE JAMES** (treasurer) are the rudder that keeps the ship steady. They continue to maintain an open heart and open mind when dealing with sensitive matters that will affect the broader congregation."

"I appreciate Michelle's sense of humor, and her ability to translate finances into a language that we can all grasp. Also, mad spreadsheet skills!"

"I appreciate Michelle's hard work serving both finance

and board duties and keeping a great sense of humor during it all."

"Michelle meets the challenges of her position and balances the needs of her family with grace."



"**BOB BROWN**, member at large, has a willingness to step in when needed on the board and elsewhere at UUCS."

"Bob deeply cares about the entire congregation and is always happy to help."

"Bob always asked questions that helped keep us focused on our goals."



"I appreciate **CHRIS HOUCK**'s quiet determination and hard work [as vice president of the board]."

"Chris provided a sense of calm and consistent leadership."

"I appreciate Chris for his hard work on the stewardship campaign and his continuing work with our subtenants."

"I really appreciate the incredible amount of work Chris has put into his work on the board, and how he carefully considers all decisions."



"**LINDA WEAVER** is a gift to our congregation. She serves with dignity and offers herself with compassion to our growing congregation."

"Linda Weaver's commitment and dedication to the children and youth of our congregation is unmatched, and one of the most important contributions that gets made."



"**BONNIE LEPOFF**'s organizational skills are awesome, and she makes them seem effortless."

"Bonnie was always an eager supporter of me as I struggled to find my footing. Invaluable and enthusiastic support!"



Many thanks to all of you for your hard work, support, and commitment.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL



Shelley Tamres,  
Co-Chair, Social  
Justice Council

Another church year is coming to an end soon. Much has happened on the Social Justice front this past year, from a benefit concert to a highway cleanup, from helping out with RE social justice projects to adopting a new partner school overseas, from recycling to a movie and discussion series, from Christmas presents for immigrant families in need to food donations to Loudoun Interfaith Relief.

The SJC is seeking new leadership for the coming year. A new chairperson will be elected at the August 5 meeting. If you are looking for a way to make a big impact, this might be the perfect opportunity for you.

The current plan for our annual congregational retreat in the fall is to contemplate our social justice program and determine what direction to head with it in the future. In order to prepare for this, Rev. Anya suggested we interview various Loudoun County leaders over the summer to determine what local needs exist that we might be able to help with. Please contact either Kim Cleland or Shelley Tamres if you would like to participate in this process.

Our May adopt-a-highway cleanup of Davis Drive was a huge success. At least 18 adults and 16 children and youth helped out. What a wonderful congregation! Thanks to all who participated, and special thanks to Linda Weaver for making the trips to the Aldie VDOT office to pick up and drop off equipment in addition to organizing the RE portion of the event. We will do another cleanup in the fall.

The May immigration movie series was also a big success. The documentaries were very informative and the discussions very thought provoking.

**Offering:** Thanks to your generous contributions during the month of April, we sent \$337.57 to the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy.

To honor the June liturgical theme of Unity, the UUCS Social Justice Council selected **Loudoun Interfaith BRIDGES** as the recipient of the SJ portion of the June offerings. The purpose of Loudoun Interfaith BRIDGES

is to bring together communities of different faiths to collectively address common challenges, and to build bridges of understanding and respect between diverse religious and ethnic entities. In the accomplishment of this purpose, Loudoun Interfaith BRIDGES shall endeavor to build relationships in interfaith dialogue, goodwill, education, and service.

The July SJ portion of the offerings will go to **Loudoun Cares**. Their mission is to improve the quality of life of Loudoun County residents and the collective efficiency of its nonprofits by building an infrastructure of shared resources and collaborative programs.

The August SJ portion of the offerings goes to the **Loudoun Free Clinic**. The Loudoun Free Clinic was established to serve low-income, uninsured residents of Loudoun County. The clinic provides quality medical care at no charge to adults (age 18 to 64) with acute and chronic illnesses by relying almost entirely on volunteers—physicians, nurses, and others who give freely of their time—and on the generous support of our community partners and private citizens.

### Want to share something in the September newsletter?

- ✓ Reflections or articles related to the September liturgical theme, *Call*.
- ✓ Announcements (including those related to events that will take place in September and the first two weeks of October)
- ✓ Group or committee updates (what you accomplished, what's planned for next month, etc.)
- ✓ Recent photos taken at UUCS or during UUCS events. If you have more than three or four photos, email to let us know before sending them.

Please send anything you'd like to include to [newsletter@uusterling.org](mailto:newsletter@uusterling.org) by August 15th.

## LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION

### *News From Our Partners in Uganda*

By Lindy Reeder

**O**n July 22, Rev. Mark Kiyimba will be visiting UUCS and will lead our Sunday service.

Rev. Mark Kiyimba is minister of the UU Church in Kampala, Uganda, and started New Life School to provide education for children in a remote village where public education is lacking. Earlier this year, our church entered into a partnership with the fifth grade class at New Life School.

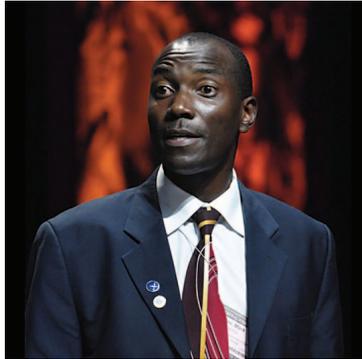
He will be in the United States to accept the 2012 Virginia Uribe Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights from the National Education Association (NEA). The Virginia Uribe Award honors a recipient “whose activities in human rights significantly impact education and the achievement of equal opportunity for those facing discrimination due to their sexual orientation” (NEA website, [www.nea.org/grants/51350.htm](http://www.nea.org/grants/51350.htm)).

The following article, reprinted from the NEA website, describes his work in Uganda.

In March, 2009, three American evangelical Christians arrived in Uganda to speak at a conference on homosexuality.

For three days, according to participants, thousands of Ugandans listened raptly to the Americans—Scott Lively, a missionary, Caleb Lee Brundidge, a self-described former gay man who leads “healing seminars,” and Don Schmierer, a member of Exodus International whose mission is “mobilizing the body of Christ to minister grace and truth to a world impacted by homosexuality.” They spoke about how “the gay movement is an evil institution whose goal is to defeat the marriage-based society and replace it with a culture of sexual promiscuity.”

Homophobia had already existed in Uganda, said



Rev. Mark Kiyimba

human rights advocates, but the three evangelicals threw gasoline on the fire. According to Gay Ugandans, there has been an outburst of beatings, blackmail, and death threats like “Die Sodomite!” scrawled on their homes. To make matters worse, one Kampala newspaper has now begun printing the names and addresses of “known” homosexuals. And just one month after the visit of the three evangelicals, an Anti-Homosexuality bill was introduced into the Ugandan Parliament. The bill calls for life imprisonment or death for homosexuals.

Into this cauldron of hate has stepped an extraordinary man—the Rev. Mark Kiyimba. He is the senior minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Uganda—the only church in the country that welcomes all people—gays and lesbians, blacks and whites, rich and poor. A former Pentecostal minister, Rev. Kiyimba has preached the gospel of love. He has publicly opposed the attacks on gays and lesbians and denounced the Anti-Homosexuality bill. For his courage, Rev. Kiyimba has received hundreds of death threats.

In his speeches and sermons in the U.S., Rev. Kiyimba’s message has been: “You as westerners have the power to help us quench this terrible fire. We need you to speak to your evangelical ministers who have been spreading this hate speech. You can speak to your congressmen and women, and maybe they can help.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said: “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” Rev. Kiyimba is the living embodiment of Dr. King’s words.

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***“You as westerners have the power to help us quench this terrible fire.”***

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***—Rev. Mark Kiyimba***

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## A MONTH OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

### June: Unity

Members of our congregation are invited to engage the practice of *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* is Latin for divine reading, spiritual reading, or holy reading, and represents a traditional practice of scriptural reading intended to promote communion with that which is ultimately meaningful. It is a way of praying or meditating with sacred words that calls one to study, ponder, listen and, finally, rejoice within the soul. Unitarian Universalists embrace a wide-reaching definition of scripture, finding words of profound meaning in the works of the world religions, scientists, poets, and the experiences of our own lives.

Find the time in your day to read each piece every day for a full week, Sunday through Saturday. Read, pause, read again, pause, and then reflect. You may choose to write each quote in a journal and add notes from your reflections. You may choose to read each piece to your family at the dinner table. You may choose to read in the morning or before sleep. You may choose to use the piece to gather your spirit for prayer or meditation.

#### June 1–3

##### A Prayer for the Unity of All Life (Hindu)

*May the winds, the oceans, the herbs, and night and days, the mother earth, the father heaven, all vegetation, the sun, be all sweet to us. Let us follow the path of goodness for all times, like the sun and the moon moving eternally in the sky. Let us be charitable to one another. Let us not kill or be violent with one another. Let us know and appreciate the points of view of others. And let us unite.*

#### June 4–10

##### Psalm 133 (Bible)

*How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!*

*It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion.*

#### June 11–17

##### From Natalie Goldberg

*Whether we know it or not, we transmit the presence of everyone we have ever known, as though by being in each other's presence we exchange our cells, pass on some of our life force, and then we go on carrying that person in our body, not unlike springtime when certain plants in fields we walk through attach their seeds in the form of small burrs to our socks, our pants, our caps, as if to say, "Go on, take us with you, carry us to root in another place." This is how we survive long after we are dead. This is why it is important who we become, because we pass it on.*

#### June 18–24

##### From Rumi

*The water in the stream may have changed many times, but the reflection of the moon and the stars remains the same.*

#### June 25–30

##### From Chief Seathl

*Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove has been made holy by some sad or happy event in days long vanished. Even the rocks, which seem to be voiceless and dead as they swelter in the sun along the silent shore, thrill with memories of stirring events connected with the lives of my people. And the very dust upon which you now stand responds lovingly to their footsteps because it is rich with the blood of our ancestors and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch.*

## SACRED STORY FOR ALL AGES

*The sacred stories come from the sources of our Unitarian Universalist faith. This one is from the fifth source, humanist teachings that counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science.*

### *In the Beginning, The Universe Story*

by Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow

This is the Universe Story that belongs to all Earthlings. In the beginning, about 13.7 billion years ago, our Universe was born. Nobody yet has discovered why our Universe was born. But scientists have discovered lots of evidence that our Universe really did have a beginning, and that the beginning happened suddenly more than 13 billion years ago. So, just like us, the Universe came into existence by being born.

The amazing thing is that, even though we don't know why the Universe was born, or exactly how it was born, we do know a lot about what has happened ever since. Scientists have discovered that the Universe grew from something smaller than a honeybee, smaller than a cherry pit, into something so immense that it now contains billions of galaxies. We also know that the Universe is still growing. It is still growing, just like you are still growing.

The Story of the Universe is actually your story. It is the story of who all your ancestors and cousins are—not just your human ancestors and cousins, but also the great-great-great-great-great grandparent you share in common with a dog, and with the even older common ancestor you share with a shark, all the way back to when the only creatures alive on planet Earth were bacteria. The wonderful thing is that this story is exactly the same story for all the children born on this planet.



### *Family Discussion*

Have you every thought about how you are related to every person on Earth? How does thinking about this change how you feel or act?

How does thinking about how you are related to dogs, cats, and sharks change how you feel or act?

How do you feel when you think about how big the Universe is? Does it make you feel small, or do you feel proud to be a part of this huge and amazing Universe?

To explore the wonder of the Universe and the important role humans play in it, attend Sunday morning Religious Education sessions this summer. The summer program this year is based on Connie Barlow's *We Are Made of Stardust*.

## CALENDAR

### Stay Up to Date with UUCS Events

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| <b>J U N E</b>      | ////////////////////////////////////                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Sunday, 6/3</b>  | <p><b>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Our Living Faith”</b><br/>Religious Education (RE) participants and their leaders share some of the learning and joy they experienced this year as they explored the ways UU values provide guidance in living lives of goodness, justice, and love. The children’s choir, directed by Kris Adams, provides a musical treat.</p> <p><b>11:45 pm — Town Hall meeting in the sanctuary</b><br/>UUCS will hold a town hall meeting immediately after the service to discuss the issues that will be voted on at the General Assembly.</p> <p><b>Noon — Inquirer’s Class in Rev. Anya’s office</b></p> <p><b>12:15 pm — Social Justice Council monthly meeting in the RE space — all welcome</b></p> |
| <b>Sunday, 6/10</b> | <p><b>10:30 am — Worship service: “Service of the Living Tradition”</b><br/>In this annual service of recognition and remembrance, Rev. Anya will honor the deaths, losses, births, and hopes that we have experienced over the past church year. Our choir will weave spiritual melodies throughout.</p> <p><b>Noon — All-Church Picnic</b><br/>The picnic will be held in Claude Moore Park immediately following the service.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Sunday, 6/17</b> | <p><b>10:30 am — Worship service: “Father Sun”</b><br/>In this solstice-themed service, Rev. Anya reflects on the archetypal image of the sun as the father, as well as the tragic myth of Daedalus and Icarus, who were father and son.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Sunday, 6/24</b> | <p><b>10:30 am — Worship service</b><br/>Stevens Miller, member of our congregation, asks us “What does it mean to be a good citizen?” Miller served Loudoun county as a member of the board of supervisors. The Miller family (Stevens, Liz, and their son Fordon) works to manifest a better citizenry and a more just world.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>J U L Y</b>      | ////////////////////////////////////                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Sunday, 7/1</b>  | <p><b>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Another American Dream”</b><br/>Rev. Anya will lead our service and Harry Harris will share dulcimer music.</p> <p><b>Noon — Inquirer’s Class in Rev. Anya’s office</b></p> <p><b>12:15 pm — Social Justice Council monthly meeting in the RE space — all welcome</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                     | <p><b>Please consult the calendar on the UUCS website, <a href="http://www.uusterling.org">www.uusterling.org</a>, for the July and August worship schedule and events.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |